

## Preparation Matters

In the current circumstances local church leaders will feel keenly their responsibility and calling to pastor the flock of God. In looking to the future, it is not wise to assume that help will somehow come from elsewhere (whether from abroad or through some Church of England provision).

Crunch issues for the long-term welfare of local congregations are ordinations and institutions.

Although a vacancy may seem a good while off at present it is wise for local church leaders to plan for the possibility of having to leave buildings, and for ministry to be entirely self-supporting. It may not ultimately be necessary to use these plans, but it is surely wise to make them.

To that end a small group could be formed in every local church (eg a sub-committee of the PCC) to think through the following issues:

(1) A suitable alternative meeting place (location and size especially significant)

(2) A separate trust into which congregation giving can be directed. As a minimum, this will provide confidence for those who give to the local church's ministry. Matters to further consider under this might be:

- Terms of the trust – as broad as possible to cover ministry in the area
- Suitable trustees
- Ownership of property
- Ownership of expensive equipment and furnishings bought in the coming years could be vested in the trust
- Consider paying unordained staff through this trust
- Alert the congregation to the danger of legacies being directed simply to the PCC

(3) Finances and budgeting for the future. Particular points to consider might be:

- Support and funding of ordained staff
- Support and funding of non-ordained staff
- Where funding for all of the above will not be possible, planning for alternative lay ministry. What are church's core ministries?
- Mission partner support

(4) HR matters – independent operation of payroll, pension etc

(5) Legal advice in relation to charity law etc (note that Church of England legal matters are mostly distinct from this)

(6) Thorough check who owns halls, houses and other buildings

(7) Consider how to house the vicar if the vicarage is no longer available. Investigate mortgage possibilities

- (8) Plans for communication with the congregation over the long term for everything that is being considered
- (9) Provision of safeguarding
- (10) Position in relation to any associated church schools
- (11) Seek to work and plan together with nearby churches where possible – sharing information etc
- (12) Reflect on persevering with wisdom of Anglican structures – wardens, PCC, Electoral Roll etc. Some may see in these plans an opportunity to unwisely experiment with other structures and pursue them in a way which becomes a distraction. Communication of this to the wider congregation
- (13) Reflect on how the church leaders and staff in particular can be encouraged in unsettling times

Inevitably different churches will have differing circumstances. Some of the above may not be relevant in your particular case. Some may seem impossible to implement in your circumstances. However thinking through whatever is possible will still help future ministry.

Many might be concerned about the time and effort that would be involved in pursuing these matters and think that it distracts from the work of the gospel. However it needs to be recognised that doing this is worthwhile because it has the goal of clarifying the gospel message to your local community and beyond.

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